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ABSTRACT

During the 1986-87 academic year, 1,115 high school seniors participated in the College Now (CN) program of New York's Kingsborough Community College. A study was undertaken to assess the academic progress of the 463 students who subsequently enrolled in any City University of New York (CUNY) college during the fall of 1987. To determine differences in choice of CUNY college, the study compared the enrollment patterns of the CN students to the other 24,936 first-time freshmen. In addition, outcomes for CN alumni were compared to outcomes of an equal random sample of first-time freshman who had not participated in the program. Study findings indicated the following: (1) 69.3% of the CN alumni entered into a senior CUNY college and, while only 54% of other first-time freshmen did so; (2) CN students were much more likely than other first-time freshmen to continue their studies for a second (95% vs. 81.6%) and third (83.2% vs. 64.1%) semester; (3) CN students required less remediation and advanced more rapidly, earning 18.6 degree credits at the end of their first year compared to 12.2 for other first-time freshmen; (4) CN students were 20% more likely to enter a BA program than other first-time freshmen and were less likely to enroll part-time; and (5) CN alumni passed an average of 2 out of 3 skills tests, compared to an average of 1.4 tests for other students. (Data tables and comments from respondents to a 1990 survey of 2,400 CN alumni are included.) (KP)

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THE IMPACT OF COLLEGE NOW:

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE RETENTION AND ACADEMIC PROGRESS OF PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS WHO ENTERED CUNY IN FALL 1987

David Crook

Office of Institutional Research and Analysis

May 1989

Introduction

During the 1986-1987 academic year, 1,115 high school seniors participated in the College Now program sponsored by Kingsborough Community College. This report assesses the academic progress of those participants who subsequently enrolled in any of the 17 undergraduate colleges of the City University of New York (CUNY) during the fall of 1987. The primary questions to be addressed in this analysis are

1) How many College Now participants enrolled at CUNY and which colleges did they attend?

2) How well do College Now alumni do academically, compared to other CUNY students? We shall assess several measures of academic performance, including the rate at which students accumulate degree credits, the amount of remediation they must undertake, and the rate at which they are retained-- that is, the rate at which they return after each semester of attendance.

Methodology

Of the 1,115 students who took part in the College Now program during the 1986-1987 academic year, 463, or 41.5 percent, enrolled at a CUNY college in fall 1987. In order to determine whether these students differed from other first-time freshmen in their choice of CUNY colleges, we have compared the enrollment pattern of College Now students with that of the 24,936 other students who were first-time freshmen in the fall of 1987.

Next, in order to gauge the impact of College Now on subsequent academic progress, we constructed a file containing all 463 College Now alumni and an equal random sample of first-time freshmen who had not participated in the program. We have included part-time students in the merged file so that we can take into account the potential influence of College Now on the full range of credit and hour accumulation. We have also included students who were admitted as part of the SEEK and College Discovery programs so that we can determine whether College Now students are as likely as other students to enter via a special program.

Findings

Table 1 shows where former College Now students begin their studies at CUNY. Almost 7 of 10 enter a senior college. Probably because most program participants live in Brooklyn, a large majority (about two-thirds) choose to attend one of the CUNY colleges located there-- Kingsborough Community College, New York City Technical College, and Brooklyn College. Other first-time freshmen are more apt to begin at a community college, are much less likely to enroll at Brooklyn College or Kingsborough Community

College, and in general are somewhat more evenly distributed across the other campuses.

Students who take part in College Now are much more likely than others to continue their studies for a second and third semester. They also require less remediation and progress toward a degree more rapidly. Table 2 summarizes these divergent outcomes. The advantages of program participants begin with placement at entry to the University. Freshmen who had taken College Now classes are almost 20 percentage points more likely than others to enter a BA program as regular admits and somewhat more apt to enter via the SEEK program. Once enrolled, College Now alumni are more apt to continue their studies into the second and third semesters. While 95 percent of College Now students returned in the spring of 1988, only 81.6 percent of other students did so. By fall 1988 this 13.4 percentage-point margin in favor of the College Now cohort had grown to 19.1 percentage points: 83.2 percent of program alumni returned for a third semester, compared to only 64.1 percent of other students.

College Now is also associated with enhanced academic progress. Table 2 shows that program participants are less likely than others to enroll part time, and that they require less remediation during their first two semesters. Partly as a result, program alumni make substantially faster progress toward their degree. By the end of their first year of college work at CUNY, they have earned an average of 18.6 degree credits, compared to only 12.2 credits earned by other freshmen.

In order to explore possible explanations for the superior performance of College Now participants, we compared them to other first-time freshmen to ascertain whether the two groups differed in the quality of their high school background or academic ability. Students who were enrolled in the program appear to be better prepared to persist and progress in their academic careers than other freshmen. That is, College Now students are better off in terms of factors that have been shown to predict persistence and progress in college. As Table 3 indicates, College Now enrollees earned slightly higher grades in high school and completed an average of about 1 more college preparatory course than did other freshmen. Of the 463 College Now students who entered CUNY, only 1 (.2 percent) had earned a GED, compared to 13 percent of other first-time freshmen. This superior high school preparation and, possibly, participation in College Now, enhanced academic ability as measured by skills test performance. Program alumni passed an average of 2 out the 3 required tests, while other students succeeded at an average of 1.4 tests. Thus, College Now students emerge from their high school training better equipped to do college level work, partly because of their high school preparation.

Can the superior performance of College Now participants be explained entirely by their superior high school grades, more extensive college preparatory work, or greater academic ability? In order to explore further the possibility that the program itself enhanced performance in college, we ascertained whether College Now alumni were more likely to persist and to earn more degree credits, even when high school background and ability are controlled. These analyses are presented in Tables 4 and 5.

As Table 4 indicates, College Now participants are more likely to continue their studies beyond the first semester than non-participants who earned comparable high school grades, completed the same number of college preparatory courses, or passed the same number of skills tests. Program alumni also earn more degree credits during their first year than other comparably prepared freshmen (Table 5). Both tables are consistent with the conclusion that College Now improves outcomes among students at all levels of high school preparation and academic ability.

In order to assess the unique impact of the College Now program as well as the various dimensions of high school background and academic ability that affect performance in college, it is necessary to control for all of these factors simultaneously. By so doing, we can determine whether, for example, College Now alumni earn more degree credits than other freshmen who are comparable, not just in terms of high school grades, or the number of college preparatory completed, or in skills, but in terms of all three factors. Multiple regression is a statistical technique that allows us to control for College Now participation as well as several other predictors at the same time in order to estimate the unique impact of each on retention and credit accumulation. Table 6 summarizes the results of two regressions-- one predicting enrollment as of fall 1988 and the other, degree credit accumulation during the first year.

Column 1 of Table 6 gives the percentage difference in the likelihood of returning to CUNY in the fall of 1988 associated with a one-unit difference on the predictors listed at the left. Row 1 indicates that one unit of high school average is associated with a difference of .3 percent in the probability of being enrolled in the fall of 1988. Thus, students who earned a high school grade of 80 are on average about 3 percent more likely to return than students who received a 70. Column 1 indicates that none of the predictors listed in the table, with the exception of participation in College Now, has much impact on retention. Students who took part in College Now, however, were 15 percent more likely than other freshmen to have returned after their first year.

The predictors exert a much greater influence on degree credit accumulation. Column 2 shows the average number of credits associated with each unit on the predictor variables. Returning to row 1, we see that a unit of high school average is associated with a difference of .29 degree credits over the first year. We would expect that two students with high school grades ten points apart would differ in their degree credit accumulations by about 3 credits as of spring 1988. In addition to high school grades, performance on the skills tests and pursuing an AA rather than a BA affect degree credit accumulation. The single largest influence on credits, however, is participation in the College Now program. Former participants who are comparable to non-participants in terms of every other predictor in the table earn an average of about 4 credits more by the end of their first year.

Because the data are not available, we have not been able to control for a number of other factors on which College Now participants may differ from other CUNY freshmen. Participants may well hope to complete more years of education than other freshmen or aspire to occupations requiring superior academic performance. The two groups may differ in other aspects of motivation, as well as in terms of the cultural resources available to

them in their homes. To the extent that the program tends to attract students who already possess these or other characteristics that promote retention and academic progress, the impact of College Now reported in Table 6 will be reduced. Nevertheless, the available evidence suggests that the program does substantially improve both the likelihood that participants will continue their postsecondary studies and their rate of progress toward a degree.

TABLE 1
COLLEGE NOW PARTICIPANTS
AND OTHER FIRST-TIME FRESHMEN
BY COLLEGE OF ENROLLMENT, FALL 1987

COLLEGE	COLLEGE NOW STUDENTS[1]	ALL OTHER STUDENTS[2]
Senior Colleges		
Baruch	12.3%	7.0%
Brooklyn	33.9%	6.1%
City	2.2%	2.8%
Hunter	6.9%	5.9%
John Jay	3.0%	5.1%
Lehman	0.0%	3.0%
NYC Technical	7.6%	9.8%
Queens	0.6%	6.7%
Staten Island	1.5%	5.4%
York	1.3%	2.2%
TOTAL SENIOR COLLEGES	69.3%	54.0%
Community Colleges		
Bronx	0.0%	4.7%
Evers	0.0%	1.1%
Hostos	0.0%	3.6%
Kingsborough	24.8%	8.5%
LaGuardia	0.0%	8.0%
Manhattan	5.4%	10.3%
Queensborough	0.4%	9.9%
TOTAL COMMUNITY COLLEGES	30.7%	46.0%

1 Based on 463 students.
2 Based on 24,936 first-time freshmen who were not College Now participants.

TABLE 2

ACADEMIC OUTCOMES:
COLLEGE NOW PARTICIPANTS COMPARED TO OTHER CUNY STUDENTS

OUTCOME	COLLEGE NOW PARTICIPANTS (N=463)	ALL OTHER STUDENTS (N=463)[1]
Program at entry		
BA Regular	49.7%	28.3%
BA SEEK	9.9%	6.5%
AA Regular	35.9%	58.1%
AA Special	4.5%	7.1%
TOTAL	100.0%	100.0%
Retention		
Retained Spring 1988	95.0%	81.6%
Retained Fall 1988	83.2%	64.1%
Progress		
Full-time, Fall 1987	93.5%	87.3%
Full-time, Spring 1988	95.2%	87.3%
Remedial Load,[2] Fall 1987	3.4	4.4
Remedial Load,[2] Spring 1988	1.7	2.1
TOTAL Remedial Load[2]	5.2	7.1
Degree Credits[3] Earned, Fall 1987	9.3	6.1
Degree Credits[3] Earned, Spring 1988	9.3	6.2
TOTAL Degree Credits[3] Earned	18.6	12.2
Total Load[4], Fall 1987	12.4	10.0
Total Load[4], Spring 1988	10.8	8.0
CUMULATIVE TOTAL Load[4]	23.3	18.2

1 Based on a random sample of first-time freshmen who had not participated in College Now. Special program entrants and part-time students are included in this table and in all subsequent tables.

2 Includes non-credit courses, non-credit hours attached to compensatory and developmental courses, and degree credits awarded for developmental courses, which are remedial.

3 Includes all degree credits, including those awarded for compensatory and developmental courses.

4 All degree credits plus all non-degree courses and hours.

TABLE 3

ACADEMIC BACKGROUND:
COLLEGE NOW PARTICIPANTS COMPARED TO OTHER CUNY STUDENTS[1]

ACADEMIC BACKGROUND	COLLEGE NOW PARTICIPANTS (N=463)	ALL OTHER STUDENTS (N=463)
High school average[2]	78.5	76.1
Total Academic Units completed in high school	10.5	9.6
Number of Skills Tests Passed	2.0	1.4
GED	0.2%	13.0%

1 This table includes all College Now alumni who enrolled at a CUNY college in fall 1987 and an equal random sample of other CUNY first-time freshmen who had not been involved with the program.

2 High school average is available for only 394 of the 463 College Now participants and 349 of the 463 other students in our random sample.

TABLE 4

SPRING AND FALL 1988 RETENTION RATES
CONTROLLING FOR ACADEMIC BACKGROUND FACTORS[1]

Academic Background	PERCENT RETAINED SPRING 1988		PERCENT RETAINED FALL 1988	
	College Now	Other	College Now	Other
High school average[2]				
50 to 74.9	95.1%	83.5%	81.1%	63.3%
75 to 79.9	94.8%	82.5%	83.5%	67.5%
80 to 84.5	90.7%	95.7%	77.6%	79.7%
85 to 89.9	98.0%	89.7%	94.1%	89.7%
90 and higher	100.0%	69.2%	100.0%	61.5%
Total Academic Units completed in high school				
0 TO 8.5	98.3%	77.0%	85.2%	52.8%
9 TO 12.5	93.3%	82.3%	78.0%	70.0%
13 TO 19	95.0%	89.6%	86.6%	76.8%
Number of Skills Tests Passed				
0	96.2%	81.6%	84.9%	59.6%
1	94.3%	75.5%	78.2%	65.1%
2	94.7%	85.4%	82.7%	61.0%
3	95.3%	83.7%	85.3%	73.5%

1 This table includes all College Now alumni and an equal random sample of other CUNY first-time freshmen who had not been involved with the program.

2 High school average is available for only 394 of the 463 College Now participants and 349 of the 463 other students in our random sample.

TABLE 5

TOTAL DEGREE CREDITS EARNED BY SPRING 1988
CONTROLLING FOR ACADEMIC BACKGROUND FACTORS

ACADEMIC BACKGROUND	MEAN DEGREE CREDITS EARNED	
	College Now	Other
High school average[1]		
50 to 74.9	16.3	10.5
75 to 79.9	18.3	12.6
80 to 84.5	17.4	18.2
85 to 89.9	23.8	20.0
90 and higher	25.5	16.3
Total Academic Units completed in high school		
0 TO 8.5	17.3	8.3
9 TO 12.5	16.9	12.7
13 TO 19	21.0	17.2
Skills Tests Passed		
0	12.2	9.0
1	13.7	9.7
2	17.6	13.7
3	23.4	17.2

1 High school average is available for 394 of the 463 College Now participants and 349 of the 463 other students in our random sample.

TABLE 6
REGRESSION OF RETENTION AND DEGREE CREDIT ACCUMULATION
ON HIGH SCHOOL BACKGROUND, SKILLS, LEVEL OF ENTRY
AND COLLEGE NOW PARTICIPATION

Predictors	Academic Outcomes: Still enrolled Fall 1988 (1)	Academic Outcomes: Degree Credit Accumulation by Spring 1988 (2)
High School Average[1]	.3%	.29**
Total Units of College Preparatory Course Work[2]	.2%	-.12
Participated in College Now[3]	15.0%**	4.12**
Score on Math Skills Test[4]	.4%	.26**
Score on Reading Skills Test[4]	- .5%	.21**
Score on Writing Skills Test[4]	1.3%	1.16**
Began in an AA program[5]	- 6.0%	1.95**
CONSTANT	36.4%	-25.57
Adj. R-Squared	.063	.319

** Significant at the .01 level.

1 The statistics reported in this row give the percentage change in the probability of being enrolled in fall 1988 (Column 1) and the number of degree credits accumulated by spring 1988 (Column 2) associated with each point of high school average, all other predictors held constant.

2 The statistics in this row are similar to those described in note 1, except they give the probability and credits associated with each additional college preparatory course completed in high school.

3 Reported in this row are the likelihood of being enrolled in fall 1988 and the number of degree credits associated with College Now participation, compared to non-participation.

4 Shown here are the likelihood of being enrolled in fall 1988 and the number of degree credits associated with each point earned on a skills test, all other predictors held constant. The reading test scores have been standardized across forms.

5 This row gives the percentage change in the likelihood of being enrolled in fall 1988 (column 1) and the number of degree credits (column 2) associated with enrollment in an AA program compared to pursuit of a BA.

COLLEGE NOW ALUMNI SURVEY

The College Now program recently conducted a survey of 2,400 alumni who participated in the program over the last two years. Below find responses that reflect the opinion alumni have of the program in retrospect.

If you want to receive college credits while still in high school and acquire some knowledge too, then College Now is for you! Michael Levine, Abraham Lincoln H.S.; K.C.C.

College Now is a valuable experience. Going to college is a frightening experience. After College Now I felt more relaxed about what college life would be like. I took English writing. With this course I was able to write at a college level thanks to College Now! Marnia Bien-Aime, Abraham Lincoln H.S.; N.Y.C.T.

My College Now experience prepared me for the types of courses I'm taking in college. College Now was a "preview" of what is to be expected in college. Randi Levine, Abraham Lincoln H.S.; Brooklyn College.

The College Now program is beneficial to high school seniors. It gives them a taste of what college will be like and prepares them for the responsibilities they will undertake in college. Dawn Pattman, Abraham Lincoln H.S.; K.C.C.

I found the "College Now" program very worthwhile because it gave me a chance to experience a college classroom setting before I actually enrolled in college. Tawanda Hunter, Beach Channel H.S.; Pace U.

It helps you better prepare yourself for what lies ahead in the true college experience. Tony Brand, Beach Channel H.S.; Brooklyn College.

It was well worth the time and effort. Taking College Now and earning credits has saved me valuable time and money in college. Robyn Spencer, Canarsie H.S.; Binghamton.

I highly recommend the College Now program to high school seniors because it gives them a crack at taking the CUNY exam, broadens their ideas on possible careers, and promotes early adaptation to college life. Susan Wright, Canarsie H.S.; K.C.C.

College Now gave me three credits of college work that I have found are very useful as the pressure of keeping a full course load is somewhat lessened. Lee Prager, Canarsie H.S.; Albany.

College Now was a great opportunity for me to enhance myself in areas of study other than the basic courses that were mandatory to take in high school. I highly recommend College Now. It is worthwhile and gives you a better outlook on what to expect when you attend whatever college you choose. Robyn Partnow, Canarsie H.S.; K.C.C.

College Now was a rewarding experience because it showed me the seriousness of college work. I made adjustment mistakes during high school in this program that weren't made in my first freshman semester. Renee Padmore, Clara Barton H.S.; New Paltz.

I would like high school students to know that if they're considering attending college, they should take the opportunity to experience the College Now program. The people are very encouraging and supportive. Take this program seriously because College Now shows you how a real college functions. Eudice Mumex, Clara Barton H.S.; N.Y.T.

College Now is a very good learning experience especially if you want to improve your reading, writing, and math skills. It also prepares you for the responsibilities of real college life. Kathy Almendarez, Clara Barton H.S.; K.C.C.

College Now is vital to anyone who wants a smooth transition from high school to college. College life is so radically different so any first-hand warnings are a blessing. Ivy Reisner, E.R. Murrow H.S.; Brooklyn College.

College Now offers a valuable experience in dealing with professors. It also offers a very accurate glimpse into the workload of an average college student. Elina Kharmak, E.R. Murrow H.S.; N.Y.U.

I feel that the College Now program helped me a great deal. It was a great experience and now it is helping in my being able to graduate a half a year earlier. Linette Annunziata, E.R. Murrow H.S.; K.C.C.

I thought that the College Now program was very helpful in preparing me for college. It also taught me effective time management, developed good study habits and made me aware of the different careers offered. Jean Tam, E.R. Murrow H.S.; Syracuse.

The program gives you a taste of college work, plus it shows college admissions boards that you are serious about your work. Amanda Samuel, E.R. Murrow H.S.; Princeton.

College Now was a delightful experience. I met many new friends, experienced college life and developed a better idea of what college has to offer me. Raquel Hermindez, Fort Hamilton H.S.; Fordham.

It's important to realize the workload of college before you get there. College Now gives you an idea what college will be like. It may even help students decide if they want to continue with school. Michele Jean, John Dewey H.S.; City College.

It is a great idea to take courses in a program such as College Now. It made my first semester load easier and made my college expectations more realistic. Kristi Niemeyer, John Dewey H.S.; Geneseo.

The College Now experience made me realize what my academic strengths and weaknesses were. It also prepared me in terms of what to expect in college and how to deal with it independently. Migdalia Rodriguez, John Dewey H.S.; City College.

What better preparation is there for college work than an actual college level class? The transition is made easy by familiar teachers, but the work done is definitely college level. Jerry Goldstein, John Dewey H.S.; Brooklyn College.

College Now was probably one of the best things that I ever involved myself in during my high school years. Not only did I earn college credits, but it made my transition period into college much easier and less frightening. Angelo Federico, F.D. Roosevelt H.S.; Brooklyn College.

While attending the College Now Business Management course, I began to realize that business was a major I shouldn't pursue because it was something totally different from what I expected. In conclusion, the course helped me make the right decision about my major. Gabrielle Ponti, F.D. Roosevelt H.S.; F.I.T.

I advise you to take College Now because it helps you to do well on your placement exams. Don't put it off. Take College Now while still in high school. Nadine Wolf, F.D. Roosevelt H.S.; K.C.C.

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College Now prepared me with the "hands on" experience of college. It motivated me to extend my education and the credits I earned helped with my workload. Theodore Nellis, James Madison H.S.; New Paltz.

College Now helped me make up my mind to go to college. Lisa Reid, James Madison H.S.; Y.S.U.

College Now was a fantastic and enlightening experience. Besides helping me to decide on my future career, it helped me to learn responsibility and I made some great friends. Marie Pagliarello, James Madison H.S.; Baruch.

It is not going to make you totally ready for the "college experience", but it will definitely give you a sneak preview of what to expect in college. Ed Suggs, Lafayette H.S.; U. of M.

It is a good way to get college credits for free. You never know how much the credits really mean until you are in college for yourself. Michael Sgroi, Lafayette H.S.; K.C.C.

College Now is a good introduction to the structure of college life. The courses I took were interesting and enriching. If you have good study habits you will do well and if you don't, College Now will give you an idea of what changes you need to make to excel in college. College Now will save you time you would have to spend in college and some money too.. I think College Now will prove to be a positive experience for most students. New Utrecht H.S.; Brooklyn College.

The College Now program is very beneficial for those who wish to have a head start in college, especially during the freshman year, when the transition from high school to college is difficult. Danny Lee, New Utrecht H.S.; Columbia.

College Now is a great way to earn college credits while in high school. It enabled me to take less courses in my freshmen year and excel with a lighter schedule. Craig Rosmarin, Sheepshead Bay H.S.; Arizona State U.

College Now gives you an idea how the college system really works. After College Now I knew what to expect and I feel that's the reason why I am doing as well as I am. Lori Koffler, Sheepshead Bay H.S.; Brooklyn College.

The extra free credits earned through this program helped me save money and made my college workload a little easier, since I can take one or two less classes without the worry of falling behind in credits. Taking College Now was one of the best things I could have done while in high school. I highly recommend it. I should have taken a math course when I had the opportunity. It is now one of my biggest regrets since I was required to take remedial math. Greg Cohen, Sheepshead Bay H.S.; Brooklyn College.

When I traveled to KCC from high school to take the SD10 course, I got an idea of what college was really about. It was a group of students from different schools and backgrounds coming together. Just being at KCC and walking the ground of the campus gave me a good feeling inside about college in the near future. The English course was very helpful in that it showed me how to better write an essay. It showed me how to brainstorm and write an outline better, as well as save time when writing an essay. Manuel Loavarria, Sheepshead Bay H.S.; Brooklyn College.

In retrospect, most of my friends thought I was stupid to enroll in College Now. I'm glad that I didn't follow their advice. College Now was important because it gave me an idea of what college is all about, and it gave me a positive, not a "pessimistic view" of college. I would like to recommend College Now to anyone who is considering going to college. I took a remedial course in English, and it helped

a great deal. I thought that I was "great" in English, being that it is my native language. But I realized that I had some grammar problems and taking the College Now program helped me to prepare for my writing courses here at Baruch. Troy Govn, South Shore H.S.; Baruch College.

I took BA 10 in the College Now course in high school and continued business in college because I enjoyed it so much. I feel that high school seniors should definitely take a College Now course. Too many seniors slack off, and when they get to college the work is a shock to them. Elizabeth Fischer, South Shore H.S.; Oneonta.

The College Now program was an effective took for the high school senior to experience college courses. I was pleased with the manner in which the courses were taught. 've learned a great deal as a result of these courses. Caroline Pacht, South Shore H.S.; Albany.

As a result of my College Now experience I was better able to adjust to both college and campus life. Dwayne Johnson, William E. Grady H.S.; Morgan.